

St. Luke's (Episcopal) Church
17 South Fitzhugh Street
Rochester
Monroe County
New York

HABS No. NY-5654

HABS
NY,
28-ROCH,
28-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5654

ST. LUKE'S (EPISCOPAL) CHURCH

NY.
28-ROCH, 28-

Location: 17 South Fitzhugh Street, northwest corner of
Broad Street and South Fitzhugh Street,
Rochester, Monroe County, New York

Present Owner
and Occupant: Vestry and Wardens, St. Luke's Parish

Present Use: Church

Statement of
Significance: Architecturally, St. Luke's Church is an
important transition between the Colonial or
Georgian churches of New England and the true
Gothic Revival structures built at mid-century.
Other notable churches of comparable design are
St. John's Church, Providence, Rhode Island
(1810) and St. Paul's Church, Troy, New York
(1827). It is part of the City Hall Historic
District which includes the Rochester Free
Academy, Monroe County Court House, and the City
Hall. This district is recorded on the National
Register of Historic Places.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1824.
2. Architect: Josiah R. Brady (c. 1760-1832), 5 St. John's Lane, New York City.
3. Original and subsequent owners: "... Lot 85, fronting on Fitzhugh Street according to the plan laid out and surveyed by Col. Nathaniel Rochester... This property is to be used only for the erection of a house of public worship and if used for any other purpose this deed is to be null and void..."

1820 Deed, December 21, 1820, recorded in Book 1, p. 85.
From: Nathaniel Rochester, William Fitzhugh of Groveland, Charles Carroll of Franklin, Missouri Territory.
To: Vestry and Wardens of St. Luke's Parish at Rochesterville, and their successors.
For: \$1.00.

4. Builder or Contractor: H. T. McGeorge.
5. Original plans: Unknown.
6. Alterations and additions: In 1828, the building was enlarged by an addition of two bays toward the west. In 1856, the tower was remodeled, altering the upper stage to its present form, a gabled belfry. In 1836, the double pulpit was installed, followed in 1839, by the screen and canopy above it. A chancel rail, or altar rail, was installed in 1843. In 1856, the interior was "frescoed," painted tracery paneling on the west wall. The wall was again "frescoed" in either 1866-67 (the most probable date) or in 1887, this time simulating an apsidal ending with ambulatory. In 1867, a central aisle was opened, and a door opened to it through the tower. In 1925 and 1946, extensive repairs and interior alterations were made. In the 1920's organs were installed in the spaces afforded by the western-most bay of the north and south side aisles and galleries. This made the chancel a recessed bay in the center. Paneling was placed on the chancel walls at either side of the pulpit, exposed organ pipes springing from canopies which were made harmonious with the original one above the pulpit. All of this woodwork was given a dark color, as were the clustered columns of the nave. Original sections of the altar rail were reassembled to enclose the chancel (as at present) and choir stalls were introduced.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

"The tale is told that the Catholics heard of it (lot 85) and sent a representative up the valley to secure the necessary signatures of Col. Fitzhugh and Col. Carroll (founders of Rochesterville). But the Episcopalians also knew about it, perhaps from Col. Rochester himself who was Senior Warden. So they put young Henry Rochester, age fourteen, on the fastest horse they could find and the Catholic who had stopped on the way, never even heard the youngster galloping by. Thus, the title was secured." (Virginia Jeffery Smith)

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Pew diagram (n.d.), St. Luke's Church. Drawing, dated between 1825-28, St. Luke's Church. Photographs of church from various periods, St. Luke's Church. Photograph of chancel draped for Lincoln's memorial service, George Eastman House, Rochester.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Certificate of Incorporation, July 19, 1817, Ontario County Court House, Canandaigua, N. Y.

Declaration of Attachment, March 13, 1817, St. Luke's Church.

Deed, Office of Monroe County Clerk.

Documents noting installation of pulpit, 1836, and gas pipes, 1853.

McKee, Harley J. St. Luke's Church: A Report On Its Historic Architectural Values. March, 1966. St. Luke's Church.

b. Secondary and Published Sources:

Anstice, Rev. Henry. Centennial Annals of St. Luke's Church. Rochester: 1883.

_____. Centennial Annals of St. Luke's Church. Rochester: 1917.

Avery, Ralph. St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Rochester: 1967.

O'Reilly, Henry. Sketches of Rochester. Rochester: 1838.

Smith, Virginia Jeffery. "St. Luke's Church." Genesee County Scrapbook, XIII (Summer, 1966), 1-5.

_____. St. Luke's Church, Genesee Falls, 1817-1967. Rochester: 1967.

_____. St. Luke's Church: Genesee Falls, Past and Future, 1817-1967. Rochester: 1967.

3. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Office records of Parish Clerk, St. Luke's Church.

Prepared by: Harley J. McKee
St. Luke's Church
March, 1966

and

Janice Queener
Society For Preser-
vation of Landmarks
in Western New York
March, 1973

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Gothic details applied to a basically eighteenth century American church plan and elevation make St. Luke's Church an important transition in the development of church architecture and the Gothic Revival style.
2. Condition of fabric: The structure has been well restored under the direction of Harley J. McKee, in 1966-68, and continues to be well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Fifty-three feet by seventy-three feet; three bays by four bays; three-and-one-half stories, with three story annex; rectangular layout.
2. Foundations: The foundations are of rusticated free-stone.
3. Wall construction: The highly dressed gray Auburn limestone walls are set with red freestone quoins.
4. Structural system, framing: The masonry walls are load bearing. The interior vaulting system is supported by cluster columns.
5. Chimneys: None.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Three identical double leaf oak doors, each with a small pointed window with crossed tracery, are set in deeply molded, flattened arched stone doorways with simple spandrel decoration. The center door is located in the base of the projecting tower; the flanking doors provide access to the narthex and then to the side aisles.
 - b. Windows: Three pointed arched windows with plate tracery are set above the three doorways. Each is framed by a banded red freestone border which unites

door and window. The center window frame is treated as a flattened cap with carved decoration, the name of the church and date of erection. The second level of the tower contains a similar window with the more elaborate tracery of the window directly below it. The high, narrow lancet windows of the side aisles are bordered with painted decoration; the central panels are leaded in a diamond pattern.

7. Roof: The gable roof is covered with asphalt. The east end is finished in a pediment form through which rises the projecting central tower. The second level of the tower, which nearly corresponds to the base of the triangular pediment, is marked by a carved stone molding with a running design of quatrefoils. The wood gabled belfry of 1856 completes the tower, ninety feet tall. The belfry is treated as a complete unit. Molded and capped arched openings with ornamental tracery extend from the molded base to the gable. The gables are finished with carved pinnacles and a center cross. The four corners are marked by paneled vertical pier forms which rise above the gables and which are finished with spires topped by carved finials.
8. Porches: An elevated projecting stepped terrace, sloping north-south, provides access to the three east entrances. An exterior stair which abuts the church at the north-west corner leads to the west annex.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The east entrance doors provide access to the center and side aisles and galleries. The cluster columns support the ceiling vaulting and the galleries.
2. Stairways: Steep, winding stairs provide access from the narthex to each gallery. An enclosed paneled cherry railing rises from a heavy newel post. A central tower stair provides access to the second tower level or choir room and spire. There is a back stairway from the sanctuary to the annex.
3. Flooring: The center aisle is tiled.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The plaster flat wall surface has been restored to its 1856 appearance, painted in imitation of Ashlar stonework. The side aisle walls are finished with a vertical wood board wainscot. The galleries are faced with a running trefoil arch motif in relief. The vaulted ceiling has been painted with

striping and gilding emphasizing the outline of the intersections. The ridge is finished with alternating bosses, five plaster flower clusters and five rosettes. Five decorative iron tie bars span the ridge just below the rosettes. The cluster columns have been painted in imitation of light blue variegated marble as they were originally. The plaster leaf decorated capitals have been gilded. The narthex is finished with a paneled wainscot. The ceiling is fitted with a central wood traced light.

5. Doorways and doors: The arched oak double doors from the narthex into the nave are set in a heavy leaded and glazed frame. Other doors repeat the motif of the exterior entrance doors.
6. Special decorative features: The double pulpit of 1836, with its screen and canopy of 1839, are the focal point of the church. This five tiered piece of church furniture with its architectural motifs of brackets, pier paneling, arched arcades, and a myriad of carved running designs serves as a reredos for the now free-standing altar. Steps at the second and third levels provide stands for brass lights with etched glass globes. The entire arched west chancel wall is fitted with plaster tracery which frames the arched niche into which is fitted the pulpit canopy. A pierced altar rail separates the nave from the chancel.
7. Hardware: All hardware is original but not distinctive.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The church faces east toward the Monroe County Courthouse and City Hall, all part of the City Hall Historic District. An alley is located to the north and a small parking area to the south.
2. Outbuildings: The low, flat roofed three story twentieth century annex to the west, although attached to the structure, has not been described due to its more contemporary and unobtrusive style.

Prepared by: Harley J. McKee
St. Luke's Church
March, 1966

and Amy Hecker
Society For Preservation of Landmarks
in Western New York
March, 1973

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project of twenty-six selections of historical and architecturally significant Rochester structures was undertaken in 1966, by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc., Mrs. Patrick Harrington, Executive Director, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, James C. Massey, Chief. The project was under the direction of John Poppeliers, Senior Historian. Architectural and historical descriptions were contributed by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc. General photographic documentation was undertaken by Hans Padelt, Senior Engineer, Graflex, on a contractual basis with the Historic American Buildings Survey. The final documentation and editing was done by Susan R. Slade in 1978, for transmittal to the Library of Congress and the impending publication of the Historic American Buildings Survey New York State catalogue.